

Poles Report Disguised Iraqi Fighters

Wed Apr 2, 1:45 PM ET

By *ANDRZEJ STYLINSKI*

WARSAW, Poland - Polish troops fighting with the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) are encountering many Iraqi combatants in civilian clothes, the commander of Poland's special forces said Wednesday.



[AP Photo](#)

U.S. soldiers in Iraq have reported coming under fire from civilians, and four U.S. soldiers were killed last week in a suicide attack that prompted some nervousness among coalition troops.

Poland has sent 56 members of its elite GROM commando unit to the Iraq campaign in a signal of support for the United States. Unit commander Col. Roman Polko, reporting in Warsaw on his soldiers' activities, said they had come across many Iraqis who appeared to be civilians.

"It often turns out that this is not the case," Polko told a news conference.

On Monday, at least seven women and children were killed when U.S. troops opened fire on a civilian vehicle that ignored warning shots and continued to speed toward a military checkpoint.

Polko refused to give details of GROM activities in Iraq, saying the troops' safety demanded secrecy about their location and engagements. However, he said GROM members were among Polish troops who secured oil platforms on land and sea near the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr.

Polko said he believed the U.S.-led campaign in Iraq was going according to plan and that what some might perceive as slow progress was due to an effort to minimize civilian casualties.

"The coalition's aim is not to lead to any unnecessary losses, own or among civilians," he said.

Poland, which joined NATO ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) in 1999 together with Hungary and the Czech Republic, supports the U.S.-led war in Iraq and has contributed about 200 troops — including GROM members, a logistic vessel and an anti-chemical warfare unit.



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